



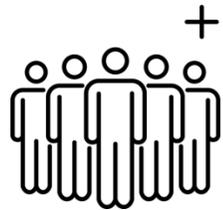
**CAPACITY  
UNLOCKED  
BRITISH ROWING  
CLUB LEADER  
MARTHA NUTKINS | DERBY ROWING CLUB  
CONFERENCE**

# DERBY ROWING

## CLUB: THE REALITY

2016

2026



~90 members  
All Volunteers

~220 members  
All Volunteers



- Average age of fleet: 18+ years
- Limited storage options
- 1 trailer that few could tow
- Reliance on in-house repairs
- Poor preventative maintenance

- Average age of fleet: 11 years
- Better storage options
- 2 trailer - better flexibility
- Partnering with sub-contractors and in-house upskilling
- Boat maintenance programme to minimise damage



2000m stretch

2000m stretch



# CAPACITY: A DUAL APPROACH

## FUNDING & FACILITIES

- Boathouse footprint - how much room do we have to grow?
- River - what can the stretch physically cope with?
- Fleet and cash availability - ageing? But how do we generate income with what we have?
- Dedicated resource - how do we generate the funds, membership increase? Is this a

## PEOPLE

- Volunteers: our lifeline. Are we looking after them?
- Is this sustainable?
- Are we harnessing all the hidden skills we have in the club?
- What happens when person X leaves?
- Succession planning
- Culture
- Fear and permission



# A QUIET REALISATION: COVID-19

Derby was comparatively busy, fairly successful, and we had brilliant people who cared. But when the COVID-19 pandemic occurred, Derby, like many clubs and organisations in the country faced volunteer decline.

It was finally time for a change.



A photograph of two young women in rowing gear, smiling and celebrating on a boat. The woman in the foreground is holding a silver medal. The background shows a body of water and a line of trees under an overcast sky.

***Every club has ambition;  
fewer have capacity***

# PHASES OF UNLOCKING CAPACITY



1

## VOLUNTEERS AS CAPACITY, NOT HELP

Clear, contained roles  
Time-bound commitments, not open-ended  
Ownership of process without committee membership

**When we stopped asking for help, and empowered people, more people**



2

## REMOVING THE SINGLE POINTS OF FAILURE

**Removed the dependency on key individuals**  
**Shared access to systems**  
**Took processes out of volunteers heads and documented them all**

**If someone went on holiday and the club stalled - we fixed that.**



3

## COMMITTEE RESET: LESS DOING, MORE LEADING

Less reactive, more proactive  
Strategic focused rather than operational  
Streamlined attendance and clear reporting  
Decisions made once and timely  
Better communication channels

**We didn't reduce responsibility, we reduced the noise.**



4

## CASTING THE NET

**Identified key hidden skills both inside and outside the membership**  
**Unlocked skills such as Finance, fundraising, communications, and house managements**  
**Provided an outlet for individuals to be involved who had no interest in what happened on the river**

**Not everyone wants to coach -**

# ROLE SILOS: ALLOWING PEOPLE TO DO WHAT THEY DO BEST

Siloing gets a bad reputation, but in volunteer sports clubs, it can be extremely effectively when done deliberately and temporarily.

It improves:

- Speed and momentum - clear ownership = faster decisions
- Accountability - clear expectations. Ambiguity is more damaging than workload
- Volunteer confidence - boundaries are clear, responsibility is defined, trust is formed



# THE REALITY OF MOST ROWING CLUB VOLUNTEERS

## JOSH RHODES-HOOK

50%

### Delivering Coaching

This volunteer spends 50% of their time volunteering, delivering coaching on the water or land to their squad.



15%

### Boatman & General Handyman

A reliance on in-house repairs and a growing membership meant Josh spent a lot of his time fixing boats or being asked for parts. It became the norm.

15%

### Parent Liaison

Safeguarding, availability, logistics, and entry fees – all very valid forms of communication we must have with our parent group.

10%

### Club Rowing Safety Advisor

Committee role, requirements to complete annual Safety Audit, to deal with challenges on the water, to make decisions on if conditions were safe. Notices regarding hazards.

10%

### Rowing Community Leader

Holds a role on the regional rowing council, is JIRR Team Manager for the East Midlands, sits on the organising committee of local events.

*He sounds great, right?*

*Note: he is, and he's here!*

*Every club needs a Josh, but  
what if we had...?*

# THE NEW NORMAL AT DERBY ROWING CLUB

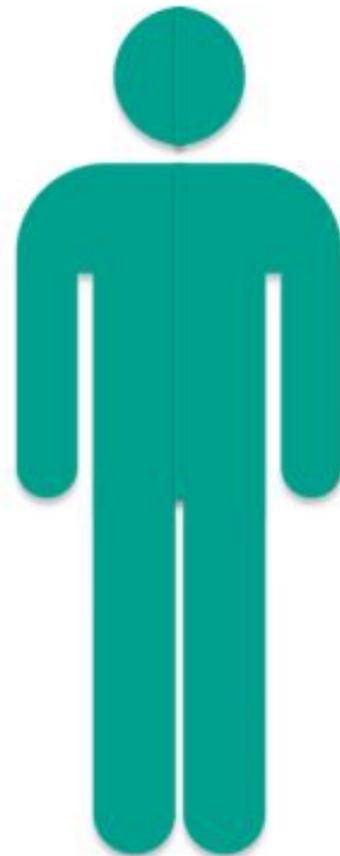
## JOSH RHODES-HOOK

100%

### Junior Head Coach

Autonomy to do what he loves most. A structure to get involved in what he's passionate about:

- Delivering coaching to 35 juniors
- Communication with his junior VC, who does parent liaison
- A deputy to support him with CRSA matters



100%

### House Manager

We cast the net and found a house manager who had no interest in rowing or coaching. Full dedicated volunteer hours to improving the building, sourcing contractors, and no bias.

100%

### Deputy Club Rowing Safety Advisor

Takes on the day-to-day tasks and a clear communication and escalation process to Josh for the big stuff.

100%

### Parent Liaison

Introduction of a Junior Vice Captain, a parent, who knows what parents need to know and can manage the administrative burden of running a successful junior squad.

Even better, find a superstar at fundraising that will spearhead a campaign to make you the top fundraiser in the East Midlands Cash for Kids Challenge.



# THE OUTCOME.

**We're very much at the start of our journey to make Derby Rowing Club sustainable.**

**But we're on the rise, our volunteers and members are happy, at less risk of burnout, and we have resilience to take us into the next era of club leadership.**

**Does this capacity unlock lead to an unlock in potential of our clubs and our crews? I can't say yes for definite, but I sure hope so.**



# **CLOSING THOUGHTS**

- **Where are we leaking capacity?**
- **Who isn't contributing — yet?**
- **What could we redesign tomorrow?**



*Capacity isn't something clubs go out and find.  
It's something they unlock — by changing how the  
club works for the people already there.*



**THANK YOU**

**VERY MUCH**

**BRITISH ROWING**

**CLUB LEADER**

MARTHA NUTKINS | DERBY ROWING CLUB

**CONFERENCE**